Athletic Council

December 15, 2023

Attending: Linda Griffin, Diane Barstow, Kirstin Kay, Rebecca Spence, Kirsten Britton, Tim Anderson, Matt Reynolds (guest), Doug Martini, Ryan Bamford, Jeff Smith (guest), Rod Warnick, Ed Ward, Tim Mitchell

1. Approval of the minutes

2. Guest speaker: Matt Reynolds (head baseball)

   In his 7th year as coach. Brought in 19 newcomers (10 freshman, 9 transfers). Best year was 2 years ago, hoping to bounce back this year. Transfer portal is a balancing act of keeping the out-door closed and in the in-door open. They largely love it here and don't want to leave which is in our favor. Transfer portal largely to fill gaps.

   Q: Are you getting enough pitchers? A mix of positions and a mix of graduate and undergraduate transfers. A few were very early commits to Power-5 schools that were from MA and recruited early. Some kids were directed to a prep year because of the activity in the portal. 5500 baseball kids in the portal last year – which makes it harder for kids these days to play in college.

   Q: Majors? A variety of majors, doing really well in the classroom, 3.43 cum GPA (when he started it was 2.7). Half in Isenberg, couple engineers, econ, mix.

   Q: Fall ball? No because then you have to commit to the roster

   Q: With limited scholarship money, do you give it all to pitchers. We had $10,500 – found in-state with highest possible need and good GPA and this money so he will be here for free, so pressure is high.

   Q: What does the A10 look like for baseball? It's good – VCU is good every year and Davidson is pretty close. The middle is anybody's each year.

   Q: At Power-5 they have 'pitching labs' – these are attractive for recruiting.

3. Guest speaker: Jeff Smith (Deputy AD for External Ops)

   At the university for > 20 yrs. 3 years ago moved to the external side. Oversaw the relocation of staff – broadcast and comm, ticketing, creative services, liaison to Learfield. Staff works very hard. Broadcasting is an area we invested in. Started at 70-90 now all are on ESPN+ (we don't have numbers, but we have the highest viewership of any A10

and do more live events of anyone in our league) so starting this year Mullins broadcast and lax games so up to about 140 events streamed. Brought back the UMass Sport Insider and the radio show hosted at the Berkshire dining commons. Road shows in January then back to Berk. Bring in talent in front and behind camera from a class on campus. Communications – hired Dan Colleran, his fully staffed, more cameras on the road. Marketing – fully staffed (Jacob Prail leading, starting really with hockey and Shanlea Kernen with others) work well with Tim Anderson and the band. Warren oversees tix sales and now has a sales team with OBG. Creative services – led by Chris Tucci – great job and have more resources here. Now that it's fully staffed, trying to get out into the community more – in Amherst and also down in Springfield.

Discussed legacy gift of 'sign man' and the pieces he may leave to the UMass archives.

Q: more equity in social media across teams: Chris is doing a good job and trying to do more. We do have a focus on our rev generation sports. Always trying to improve in this area. There are interns that are on this and trying to grow this already.

4. Update from the AD (Ryan Bamford)

Great relationship with the band. They drive a lot of the game experience, and we have a great relationship – owed to Tim's leadership.

Football in a busy recruiting period – 17 finished eligibility – 14 went into the portal (11-12 probably weren't going to get playing time so really lost only 2 starters, one declared for the draft and withdrew because of NIL opportunities elsewhere) – 35 scholarships are available to fill – probably will finish with 20-25 transfers here by spring football. Some good commits coming – signing day is next Wed – likely to sign 8-10 high school kids and the rest transfers. Most of our transfers out are those that had COVID eligibility.

New staff: Assist AD for sport admin, coming from Mt. Holyoke, Erica Lemm, played D1 soccer as a college athlete, starts Jan 3. Dave Biancamano is now with Advancement so replaced him with Drew St. Alban – assist AD at Purdue, football player in college, has overseen major gifts, good fit.

Winter sports: Swimming & diving are doing great – many records broke already this fall. New diving coach is doing well with recruiting. So, program has a good chance to do well at their championship in mid-February.

Men's basketball – young team but good start. West Virginia will be more loaded because a legal case on two-time transfers.

Women's basketball – a lot of early season injuries, 92% of the scorers left, Mike has done a good job of rebuilding, needs to find more guards, starting to improve with good health

Ice hockey – rebounding this season, moving up, 4/5 in the rankings mid-season. Goalie is second round draft pick.

All the teams come back in January. Rowing, swim and dive go south to train. Baseball, softball, lax, tracks will all be here soon.

Learfield and IMG College merged and an outgrowth of that was that teams could make sure you were getting a fair bid for your rights. We are at 70% of our contract in 2025 and this is an opportunity to go back out to market and hopefully negotiate well which would increase our revenue by 75-100%. Also new media deal for A10 – this should increase our share a little.

NCAA – president Baker put out a letter about the future of FBS which essentially says there should be a pay model for the top schools and creating a trust for those student athletes via a trust, to be equitable this comes out to be a $7-10 million commitment ($12-15 mil for some schools like Stanford with a lot of athletes) to make these trusts. Currently conceptual and a signal to congress that we're trying to fix things. This will likely take awhile to get agreement on some of these conferences to be able to break off from NCAA.

Discussed NIL – not enough education in spite of some athletes getting large money. They control it so they aren't getting taxed.

Conference realignment - C-USA has been a stop more than a destination. Delaware had to have a conference to move to FBS. C-USA is at 11 and we are still looking at opportunities, particularly for football. Now just us, UConn, and Notre Dame that are the 3 independents so finding a home is important. C-USA certainly presents travel challenges. We want to be in a league where we have a chance to win and are resourced appropriately.